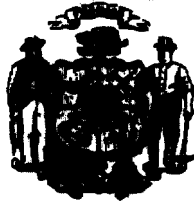


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MM 95-176/fcc98-3

**Tommy G. Thompson**  
Governor

**Joe Leean**  
Secretary



**DIVISION OF SUPPORTIVE  
LIVING**

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**State of Wisconsin  
Department of Health and Family Services**

March 27, 1998

Office of the Secretary  
Federal Communications Commission  
1919 M Street, N.W.  
Washington D.C. 20554

**RECEIVED**

MAR 30 1998

FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION  
OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY

Dear Secretary:

Staff of the Wisconsin Office for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (WDHH) have reviewed the "Further Notice of Proposed Rule Making" regarding accessibility of televised emergency information to people who are deaf and hard of hearing. We would like to offer the following comments, assuming that the deadline for comments is March 27, 1998.

Comments submitted by WDHH regarding the proposed rules are premised on the goal of ensuring that details of all emergency information is made fully accessible to all deaf and hard of hearing television viewers. To that end, WDHH offers the following comments regarding the proposed rules:

1. During the implementation of closed captioning requirements, closed captioning of all emergency information should take priority over all other programming.

WDHH suggests that separate transitional closed captioning requirements may not be necessary, if closed captioning of emergency information requirements take precedence over all other programming. Video program providers should be allowed discretion regarding the types of programs to caption first, but only for non-emergency programming. To ensure the health, safety and well-being of deaf and hard of hearing Americans, priority should be given to the closed captioning of all emergency information, by all video programmers.

2. The preferred method of transmitting emergency information to deaf and hard of hearing people should be closed captioning. Only in those instances where the costs of closed captioning would result in an extreme financial hardship (e.g., the video programming company would fail), should exceptions be allowed. In those situations, open visual scrawls, open captioning, slides, or other methods would be allowed. No video program providers should be exempt from the closed captioning requirement of all emergency information.

3. Another method of providing accessibility of emergency information might include a reference made through a means accessible to deaf and hard of hearing TV viewers, to TTY messages at appropriate agencies, to obtain more detailed information. This might include TTY numbers for access to recorded messages at the National Weather Service and federal, state and local Emergency Government Services, school district offices, etc.. This would require increased TTY access at all emergency-related agencies, but would provide an additional means of providing emergency information at a relatively low cost. This would only be the

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List A B C D E

method used in the event that closed captioning would jeopardize the existence of video programming companies.

4. WDHH agrees that "emergencies" should be broadly defined to "ensure that sufficient information regarding situations that affect the safety of viewers is available to persons with hearing disabilities with the same immediacy as it is for other viewers." To avoid practical problems or complications in interpretation of the rules, the broadcast rules should be re-written to include identical language.

5. A requirement for real-time captioning, for the transmission of emergency information, would create problems in Wisconsin because of the shortage of this service in the state. At this time, there are few real-time captioning services available statewide. Other options should be considered such as that offered in #3 above.

WDHH staff appreciates the opportunity to comment on "The Further Notice of Proposed Rule Making" and hopes that our comments can be considered in your review. If you have questions regarding our comments, please contact me at (608) 243-5717 TTY or (608) 243-5625 V.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Richelle Hammett", followed by a stylized flourish or star-like mark.

Richelle Hammett, Director  
Wisconsin Office for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing